701 It is noteworthy that the military ranking of the com-
554 moner-soldiery, which made up the rank and file of the fighters on foot, was not nearly so formal. The fortunes of war, if they did not leave him dead or maimed, could move him upward to lower nobility. Failing to achieve that, veterans could still hope for a modest fief of "gult" land, enabling him to play the "telleq saw" (great man) role over some hapless "gabbar" peasants. Meanwhile, pseudo-"telleq säw" behaved much like the proverbial sergeant of any army, making his men fear him more than any enemy, rewarding them with feasts, in this case of raw beef and medium-alcoholic mead. The only way he could maintain his following of individual-minded Amhara soldiers, each one of whom wanted to be a hero himself, was by continous personal bravery coupled with cleverness in military tactics. But here the similarity ends, for the non-noble chief of Amhara warriors had no pride of a non-commissioned officer; his ambition was to become a real "telleq säw", a minor nobleman owning "rest" lands.

782 Personal bravery was expressed and recalled in
● 726 formal boasting, a tradition that survives to this day
521 even for such civilian occasions as weddings. Prior to
535 battle each potential hero would go into a personal song and dance called "fukkara". The ceremonial dance accompanying his boast proceeded as follows: Spear, or rifle, held horizontally behind head, just above shoulders; the head moves in increasingly rapid motion from right to

782 left, while boasts are shouted rythmically. Personal
●726 boasts are interspersed with shouts of loyalty to the
521 emperor ("Addis Ababa! Addis Ababa!"), or recalling
535 past loyal bravery in the service of a provincial chieftain. Fukkara is performed also before the military games of "ganna" on Christmas, and outside the church on Epiphany (Temqät), to express the readiness of the young warriors to defend the faith, and on weddings to boast of warrior ancestors and so impress the in-laws.

[533] The song and dance is also referred to as "dan-kira " (stomping); to distinguish it from the tamer entertainment song, "_afan" performed by female "azmari" who perform accompanied by a violin ("masenqo") or banjo ("qrar"), often recounting tales of renown in ballad form. The "fukkara" in military life takes place before the "joy tent" ("das") of the king, before the "denkwan" (from diwan, round cotton or hair tent) of feudal lords on the march; or, in honor of a successful "killer" ("gedday") of a lion, rhinoceros, elephant or human enemy, in presence of the trophy.

[727] The dance after the victorious battle is called "hoto". It is a simple jumping up and down, brandishing spear, rifle or stick vertically, reminiscent of the Central and West African dancing to exhaustion. It is accompanied by refrains, shouted frequently in response to impromptu poetry made up to celebrate the event, such as "yebahalal jebo" (the hyena will swallow him, i.e. the slain enemy). This refrain is also used before the battle, to defy the enemy and pretend that victory

782 is already assured. It is also performed on Epiphany,
726 to defy human as well as spirit enemiesoof the Faith.
521
535 Before battle, it was the response of the simple soldiers, ("wätadär") to the pep-talk ("arraga") given them by the commander, encouraging them to stand their ground.

727 After thevictorious battle, the soldier could look
554 forward to taking part in the royal feasting, the "gabber", and to lording it over the local "gabbar" peasant who had to supply the means and the womenfolk. It is at least part of the basis of the pride (critics say false sense of their own worth) of the free Amhara over subject peoples, enabling evan the simplest soldier to feel that he belongs to the proprietory class. Back home, he therefore despises manual labor, and even in going into battle he used to conscript peasant boys to carry his heavy rhinoceros-hide shield ("gasha"). These boys often became replacements for slain warriors when they could secure weapons, and, in turn, recruited servants for themselves.

411 The typical weapon was the spear (the word "tor" means both war and spear) until replaced in the late 19th and early 20th centuries by rifles, though late-medieval muskets and Ottoman firearms were available to a few from the Portuguese period in the 16th century. The spear, some in use as late as the Italian invasion of 1935/6, sometimes had two or three prongs. Sabers were rare, and available mostley to noble officers. They were of the curved, Damascene type. Daggers of

• 726
635
634
648
669

[For historical information on the region of Manz in Shoa Province, along with its succession of leaders, its warfare with the Galla, and internal strife, see category 175.]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

411 181 standing at the long church services. Above all it is a weapon of offense and defense, and every Amhara male is supposed to be skilled in its use. When the *dulā* is so employed in Manz, the *bāunā* blanket is usually wrapped around the left arm to form a quick shield, the *dulā* raised high with the right to bring down on the adversary's cranium. The blows are sometimes fatal. The Manzēs are proud of their facility with the lethal stick, and nearly every district in Manz boasts that it is real "*dulā* country."

• 726 533 181 The Manzēs also excel at *shillalā*, the Abyssinian war chant. This is a form of boastful verse—partly intoned, partly shouted—which is declaimed by warriors to "heat their blood" before hitting the warpath. Children in Manz start practicing *shillalā* almost as soon as they leave the breast. The following [539] is a good specimen of Manz *shillalā*:

Agarātchu Māmā agarātchu Lālo wuzātchu Dangazē;
Mān abātu yāzzāl imbi senll gizē.

Our land is Māmā, our land is Lālo, our stream the Dangazē;
What father will order us when *imbi* we say!

Imbi is an interjection used by children to express "No!" There is a double pun in this couplet. *Mān abātu* ("Who is the father?") is a profane idiom meaning "bastard." "To say *imbi*" is another idiom, meaning "to refuse." The second line may thus be also rendered as:

What bastard dare shove us around when we tell him to keep off our lands!

181 865 152 [577] The Manzē code asks that a man be ready to defend his land and church by force. It does not approve wanton aggression. But the Manzē's disposition is notoriously aggressive, for his emotional life is relatively devoid of warmth and, on the other hand, fighting is so highly rewarded. Children are urged to be adept with the *dulā*. Their temper tantrums are welcomed as signs that they are brave. As a result the men of Manz are often overcome by the impulse toward physical aggression; assault and murder are recurrent events on their fields and trails and at their marketplaces. The discrepancy between the *norm* of physical bravery, which is operative *in certain specified circumstances*, and the *general character trait* of aggressiveness comprises a major theme in their emotional life: they feel obliged to look for justification for the aggressive actions which they have been conditioned to want to carry out. This disposition is illustrated in the words of the Manzē youth who said:

I want very much to kill somebody. The only problem is I'm not strong enough. Perhaps one day I will be. Why is it all right to kill? People kill sheep, don't they? And sheep are innocent, they don't know anything, don't do any wrong. But man knows, he knows much, and still he does wrong: every man is bad. I wouldn't kill everybody, only the bad ones. If I had an enemy, I would kill him. Maybe I will become a soldier, and kill my country's enemies.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

pleasure among the Amhara, but also as a typical response to situations which arouse anxiety. The crisis of death is met first of all by a prolonged ritual of wailing, and this is followed by a series of memorial feasts which occur on fixed days following the person's death. Any kind of bad news evokes repeated exclamations of "Ay! Ay!" When a child or wife is punished, the response is a prolonged and monotonous yell usually out of proportion to the actual pain felt. In the anxious hour before battle, war chants and boastful cries tune up the warriors' spirits. Moments of great awe, finally, such as the appearance of the holy ark when it is brought out of the church or the arrival of some great political personage, occasion a shrill ululation.

Response to illness was the anxiety area chosen as an index of positive fixation by Whiting and Child in their cross-cultural study of *Child Training and Personality*. They assumed that a fixation on oral gratification would express itself in a preference for therapies which involve swallowing something.[18] In this area, too, Amhara culture displays a preoccupation with orality, and not just in the form of swallowing. Something akin to a general principle for oral therapy appears in the well-known Amharic proverb: "For headache, shout on it! For stomach-ache, eat on it!"

A number of the oral therapies practiced by the Amhara are naturally functional, such as drinking a purgative made from leaves of the *kosso* tree to cure tapeworm, or eating a kind of unleavened corn bread to arrest dysentery. Beyond this, most of their magical therapies are also oral. Drinking holy water (and sometimes bathing in it) is believed to cure nearly every sort of affliction, from rheumatism and leprosy to eye and ear ailments. In some regions it is believed that eating the liver of a hyena will cure syphilis. Psychotherapy, too, often relies on oral remedies: the *zār* on a patient is often placated by feeding him, via the patient, a sumptuous meal. Oral types of prophylaxis are also to be noted. Garlic is eaten in order to prevent malaria. Certain kinds of animals are eaten on special occasions in order to ward off sickness. Finally, there is the remarkable phenomenon of the *lālibalā*, a night singer, who can protect himself against hereditary leprosy only by singing out loud in the night air.

In general, one can say that the Amhara have a tendency to attribute magical efficacy to oral incorporation and, to a lesser extent, to the adroit use of language. The latter belief appears in the assumption that human problems are solved by attaining some particularly fortunate verbal formulation, and in the association of outstanding wisdom with unusual mastery of language. The former appears in beliefs and legends which associate eating a lot with the attainment of unusual bravery, longevity, and physical strength. A legend about the invader Ahmad Grāñ, for example, relates that as a baby he was able to consume fourteen bowls of *ĭnjarā* at one sitting. A num-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

ber of Amhara folk tales, moreover, have as their central theme the resolution of conflict or the attainment of mastery over the environment by means of eating something or presenting food to someone.[14] It is a theme conspicuous in the legend which celebrates the ascendance of the first of the Shoan Amhara emperors, Yekuno Amlāk (1270–85). According to *The Book of the Riches of Kings,* Yekuno Amlāk ate by chance the head of a rooster which had been set out for a king of the rival Zāgwē Dynasty:

> And this youth Yakuno Amlak found the head of the cock which the woman had left by the fire-place, and he took it and ate it, and it filled his belly, and it made him an exalted person and so mighty a man that he was superior to every other man of might, and it made his face to shine like the light of the sun, and his majesty filled all the other servants of the king with awe, and all the people feared him, and they marvelled at him, and they loved him exceedingly, and they placed him in their hearts, and they recognized that the grace of God was upon him, and they said, "What is the thing which hath come upon this young man?"[15]

Oral Sadism

In addition to subserving a passive, receptive mode of relating to the environment, preoccupation with the oral zone also figures in Amhara culture as the locus of a variety of aggressive modes of behavior and fantasy. Hostility is expressed by a number of oral gestures. Sticking out the tongue and spitting on the ground in front of somebody, for example, are two forms of non-verbal insult. Biting the lower lip is an indication of anger. Touching the tongue, and then forehead, chin, and cheeks, signifies "You just wait!" When fighting, men sometimes bite one another's ears. The activation of a strong biting impulse in situations of military combat is suggested by the following refrain from an Amhara martial declaration, recorded over a century ago:

> Oh brothers, you are hungry and thirsty! Oh true sons of my mother,
> Are you not birds of prey? Come on! There is the enemy's flesh.
> And I, I will be the rider to butcher for you! Forward,
> And if you lack hydromel, I will give you my blood to drink.[16]

The theme of cannibalism appears in various forms in the Amhara imagination. One of the common subjects of traditional Amhara painting is the story of the cannibal Balaya Sab. His name is in Ge'ez, and means "Eater of Men." The story about him derives from one of the old legends collected in *The Miracles of the Blessed Virgin Mary.*[17] Balaya Sab was a wicked man who fed on the flesh of humans. At his death he appeared before St. George, who measured his evil deeds against his good deeds on a large scale. On the side of evil deeds were placed the souls of all those he had eaten, so heavy a weight that the devil began to make ready to carry him off to hell. Then

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

Political and Military Organization (prior to 1942)

*121 571 [642] The Amhara political system was based, as has been suggested, on an interlocking hierarchy of patron-client relationships. Given the tremendous importance of domination and deference in such relationships, the demands made upon an inferior by his superior seem virtually unlimited. Nevertheless, the system as a whole was characterized by a high degree of decentralization and laissez faire, and there were safeguards for protecting the rights of individuals at all levels.

*121 651 641 The basic dimension of constraint concerned the imposition of taxes of various sorts. The original meaning of the verb "to rule" in Amharic (*nag-gasa*) is "to collect tribute"; and this was the primary activity of rulers at all levels. As we have seen, provincial rulers had to deliver an annual tribute to their overlords and the latter a tribute to the monarch; local rulers, in turn, obtained income from the labors of peasants and artisans, exacting both land taxes and tithes. Peasants working land which had been granted to a noble or church as *gult* were obliged to hand over the full produce of half their land to the landlords. In addition to paying these periodically collected taxes, the peasants were liable to have their stores confiscated when required to billet soldiers or subjected to raids by passing armies.

[466] The peasants were further required to furnish a certain amount of corvée labor each month to their rulers and landlords. This might be used for purely personal projects, like cultivating the lord's estates, or for quasi-public ones, such as constructing a new church building. There was, finally, the obligation *121 641 [701] 689 [626] for every adult male who was not a member of the clergy to take up arms under his local lord whenever a levy was proclaimed. Those who did not respond to such a call were subject to fines or other punishment as well as the barbs of public opinion.

*121 701 [702] [714] The military organization of the Amhara was highly individualistic. Unlike the Galla, the Amhara did not provide for the collective training of their warriors. Each man was left to learn how to fight by himself and to provide his own equipment. A man could become a "career" soldier when he came of age simply by purchasing a shield; or he might prevail upon an established lord to arm him temporarily, with the promise of returning the equipment should he leave that lord's service. Similarly, there were no collective provisions for the supply of troops. Each man was left to fend for [705] himself, drawing upon the supply of grain he brought along and whatever booty he could acquire on the warpath; the preparation of his food was left to the wife or servant who accompanied him to battle.

*121 701 726 The conduct of a military operation exhibited a minimum of external constraint and discipline. Chains of command existed with respect to the general direction of troop movements, and the camping pattern was highly

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

structured. But the marching and fighting unit seems to have been, for all practical purposes, the individual soldier and his retainers. Battles were not fought in a disciplined manner; the outcome depended on the sheer numbers of troops, their state of morale, and the chance of catching the enemy off guard. Except for the large-scale deployment of troops in accord with the customary tactic of envelopment, there was little expectation of subordinating the impulses of individual soldiers to the needs of a "team"; for the prevailing military ethic stressed rather the heroism of the individual soldier and his drive to bring back a maximum of booty and trophies.[28]

The independent status of the common soldier in mass levies was based on the fact that he was primarily a peasant and thus expected to return to his fields as soon as a particular campaign was over. Nor were members of the more permanent armies of lords greatly constrained. Loyalty to one's lord was in many cases a lasting tie, and accounts for much of the stability that existed in such arrangements. But in general it appears to have been a factor of far less moment than was the case, for example, in feudal Japan. The Amhara soldier felt he was fighting for a lord by his own free will and, therefore, had every right to leave him when conditions justified a move. One such condition was when the lord did not reward his followers liberally enough. Another related condition was when the lord had a tendency to suffer defeat in battle. Indeed, it was not uncommon for soldiers to swarm from one side to the other during a battle when defeat for their side seemed imminent. Still another basis for deserting one's chief was the ambition of a vassal to acquire greater power, in which case he might rebel—become a *shĭftă*, in the original sense of the word—and build up a military force of his own in the hope either of impressing his erstwhile master sufficiently to be reinstated with greater honors, or of taking his place by vanquishing him in combat, or simply of carrying on as a free agent.

The civilian counterpart of the soldier's right of desertion or rebellion was the right of judicial appeal which belonged to every free Amhara. This pertained primarily to the area of property rights. A man who suffered some grievous injustice in a local court had the right of appeal, in theory at least and often in practice, to higher courts at the provincial and imperial level. There was, in addition, some possibility of relief from an inordinately oppressive governor. He might be removed accidentally by the emperor, in the continuous process of *shum-shĭr;* the people under his jurisdiction might secure his deposition through appeals to the emperor or his overlord; or they might take arms behind one of his rebellious subordinates and overthrow him by force. Traditional Amhara society thus provided significant areas of social freedom for its citizens despite the feudal obligations that lay heavy upon them.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

sinuate insults through the ambiguities of his compliments, as was illustrated above. *Shïllalä*, declaimed to arouse male courage before battle, is also heard at weddings and other festive occasions. Another type of exclamatory verse (*ho-berë*) is sung by the peasant at harvest time as he drives his cattle around the threshing floor. Verse of sorrow (*engurguro*) is intoned at time of bereavement or during moments of loneliness. Finally, in the conviviality of a drink-house enlivened by a minstrel, alone at work, or with a group of friends on various occasions, the Amhara finds that verse provides a medium for thoughts on almost any subject—people, places, animals, weather, love, work, and death. The following poem illustrates an important quality found in many of these verses, pessimism and irony, especially common in verses about love.

Fish on the cliff, baboons in the sea;
The ass after honey, while hay draws the bee;
On a baking-pan of wax, butter to see;
Or a monk from Zegamel monastery
In the pagan land of Metcha to bury;
With an unsuited person in love to be;
Thus has it ended, my affair with thee.
Leave it, forget it, just let it rest—
A hapless ass at a hyena's breast.

These various sorts of verse may be either sung or spoken. The auditory effect is often enhanced by the accompaniment of musical instruments. When serious *qenë* has been recited by its author in church, it is usually repeated by a chorus of *dabtarä* singing to the slow beat of drums and sistrums. The sad strains of *engurgo* are sometimes accompanied by the mellow ten-stringed lyre, while an instrumental background for livelier subjects may be provided by the Abyssinian banjo or one-stringed violin.

Throughout these varieties of verse forms, certain conventions are followed. Most important, the lines are supposed to rhyme; that is, end with the same consonant-plus-vowel. Inferior poets achieve this rhyme at the expense of the words they use. In addition, proper rhythm must be maintained; the lines must not "break." This means that the flow of the line must be smooth and that the metrical pattern in one line—based on the number of accents, not syllables[34]—should be paralleled by the others. A poet who breaks his lines is satirized by being dubbed a "lion."

While observing these rules—and, in the case of *qenë*, the much more complicated rules pertaining to stanza forms and poetic figures—the Amhara poet *must also be original*. In the production of verse, individuality is explicitly emphasized. Poets who use verses composed by others—this is primarily true of students of *qenë*—are insulted with the term *lëbä* ("thief"). Similarly, a poet should not repeat himself. If he repeats the same word